

# MCC Peace Section Task Force on Women in Church & Society REPORT

#40, November-December, 1981

## **Toward a Biblical View of Singleness**

by Paul M. Miller

Jesus Christ chose singleness; the Apostle Paul both chose singleness and argued for it. We ought to re-examine singleness from the view of Christ's example and Paul's urging. This does not detract from those who are led to choose marriage, but focuses on a scriptural view as singleness as a first achievement for *everyone* and an honored long-term option for some.

Christ opposed marriage for psychologically-unweaned persons. Tribal cultures assumed that the bride leave her father and mother; Christ insisted that the man, too, leave his parents (Matt. 19:5); Christ implied that everyone should first enjoy solitude, stand free of parental or peer pressures, and take self-aware positions before the Creator. (Our ceremonies of 'giving the bride away' betray our belief that a woman need never be autonomous.)

The church should teach that singleness should be sought before marriage is considered. Insecure teenagers often flee into marriage partly to hide their confusion; they perpetuate within the awesome demands of parenting the diffused peer-culture of adolescence. Persons who are not able to be alone are seldom able to endure an intense union with another person.

The church should teach its young people to "leave father and mother" emotionally by personally committing themselves to God's business. Christ began leaving his mother's control at twelve when he rebuked her gently for not being aware that "Father's business" was now his first mandate. Many years later he also declared his independence when she hinted what he should do when the wedding wine ran out.

Church counselors should be sure that those who contemplate "cleaving" to a wife or husband have first learned how to be responsibly single. The church should teach persistently that singleness needs to be achieved by everyone. Some possible results might

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*Feature material for this Report was solicited and compiled by Bertha Beachy, Goshen, Indiana, member of the MCC Task Force on Women in Church and Society, and manager of Goshen's Provident Bookstore.*

## **Focus on Singleness and Single Parenting**

include a reduction in dangerous petting by adolescents, freeing up of some years for personal mobility—perhaps in voluntary service, a climate for better choices, and fewer marriages ending unhappily.

### **Chosen Singleness Should Be Honored**

Christ modeled singleness which is chosen because God calls to ministry—and this in the marriage-dominated Jewish culture. Paul modeled Christ's example. He asserted that singleness allowed total dedication of time, emotions, body, spirit, and mobility (1 Cor. 2:22-34). Paul believed that God calls some to the "state" of singleness, to remain in it as a "call" from God (1 Cor. 7:17-26). Paul believed that a charismatic gift had been given to him to enjoy his life of single-service (1 Cor. 7:7). He hinted that in carnal Corinth where nearly everything was slanted to sexual indulgence and sex regarded as recreation, the person not spiritually gifted for celibacy might "burn" with unfulfilled genital desires" (1 Cor. 7:9). But Paul believed that the sex drive could be sublimated by God's inner grace and by service to others, and he never allowed the church to conclude that marriage was the highest ideal for everyone.

If the church would seek seriously to follow Christ's example and Paul's teaching, pursuit of single adulthood would be honored in our congregations, youth fellowships, colleges, high schools. Social interaction would be re-slanted toward achieving autonomous adulthood rather than encouraging quick pairing off into dating couples.

Ancient cultures felt that urgency to marry and bear children to achieve immortality as ancestral spirits; since the church has grasped the reality of Jesus' resurrection, that reason has no appeal. Also, people once felt God's command to "replenish the earth"; now with over-population, Christians might increasingly be expected to follow Christ's and Paul's examples.

### **The Congregation Is Family**

The congregation should be an extended family for every member. If Christ's and Paul's examples are honored in the congregation, singles will never feel "out

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*The MCC Peace Section Task Force on Women in Church and Society (formed in 1973) believes that Christ Jesus teaches equality of all persons. It strives to promote this belief through sharing information, concerns, and ideas relating to problems and issues which affect the status of women in church and society.*

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of it" in fellowships. They will discover, as Christ promised, fathers and mothers and brothers and sisters a hundred fold! The "holy kiss" of the early church might become the "holy hug" of the present pattern; persons will touch, love, share with each other. Gender will not need to be diminished or denied. Motherhood and parenting will not be made the "all in all." Singles will have a variety of friends, use solitude creatively, serve in specialized and mobile ministries and leadership, and carry on the honored tradition of Jesus and of Paul.

Singles can help call everyone to put God's work first, as Christ and Paul did. Singles can gently warn marrieds against deifying their human families. They can echo Paul's appeal to live "as if not supremely given to marriage" (1 Cor. 7:29). Within God's family the free interchange of divine loving and sharing and admonishing will enfold those single and those married.

### **Persons Made Single a Second Time**

Those who claim singleness and enjoy it, becoming autonomous adults before God before entering into marriage, do not need to hurry into a second marriage when the first marriage ends (1 Cor. 7:27). People thus left alone can return again to ministry with a freedom impossible during marriage. Instead of being devastated by loneliness and a feeling of uselessness, newly single people can be asked by the congregation to serve as a deacon or "minister of visitation and counseling" (1 Tim. 4:9-16). When everyone has first found fulfillment as a single person, and has learned that life has many joys more profound and spiritual than genital sex, then church fellowship moves a little closer to heaven where "they neither marry nor are given in marriage."

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## **Let the Church Teach and Listen** **An Open Letter to the Churches:**

I believe in the body of Christ, the church. I believe in it so strongly that it's worth challenging the church to listen to some of its hurting or neglected members.

At times the church has acted as though it were a federation of nuclear families. The result has been that the one out of three adults has often felt left out. Remember, in North American society there is one single adult over eighteen for every married couple. How can the church cultivate sensitivity toward these people on the periphery?

**1. Let the church teach the dignity of singleness.** For all persons singleness is the primary state. Let people become aware that there are many who have found singleness fulfilling, who rejoice in the *charisma* of the single life. At the same time let the church realize that there are persons to whom singleness is a source of intense suffering, even a sign of imperfection. I have seldom dared to utter this thought for fear of people's response, but research shows that single men are the unhappiest people in North American society. And Paul

Tournier has aptly said that a single woman's pain often goes unexpressed: "The spinster has to conceal her sorrow." Let the church listen, without belittlement or amusement, to the woman or man who says: "I wish I didn't care so much about being married."

**2. Let the church listen to the cry of the divorced and separated in its midst.** Family lives have been disrupted through divorce, separation, or abandonment. These Christians, sickened by the exploitation of singles in secular society, want the church to help. During a recent retreat a single mother told me: "I have stayed away from singles groups because of their emphasis on bed and board. However, I thought I would enjoy being with other divorced Christians." So did twenty others at that retreat. Let the church respond to needs which cry for attention: divorce recovery workshops, remarriage education, help for children of divorce, financial aid to single-parent homes, help for children of single-parent families, counsel for step-parent, homes, simple friendship and hospitality, initiative in mentioning the unmentionable. Let the church open itself to a new appreciation of the grace of God: there are few self-righteous persons among the formerly married.

**3. Let the church listen to the widowed persons in its midst.** The church has a long tradition of aiding the widowed. Yet it is often the little thoughtless acts which underline their pain. Imagine what it is like to find a place at a church supper only to hear someone saying, "Don't sit there. You'll break up the family." Imagine the pain of the recent widow who is suddenly excluded from the sweetheart banquet that she and her husband used to enjoy. Think of the trauma of losing most of your friends along with your husband or wife. Let the church discover that it is indeed blessed to include the widowed in its midst.

What can the church do?

**1. Let the church change its attitude toward single persons.** Mark W. Lee, writing in "The Church and the Unmarried," says: "The whole church is not an accumulation of nuclear human families. The institutional church is out of order to accept the human family at the expense of the unmarried man and woman." He suggests a remedy: "This injustice may be corrected by planning programs for singles as would be done for marrieds, by electing them to church offices other than as secretaries, by balancing the personal and social attitudes in the church, and by applying biblical truth to individual needs rather than to the family, when the individual application is the most appropriate. And, in Christian humility, marrieds may need to ask forgiveness for their lack of sensitivity and empathy toward singles. . . ." What enrichment would come from breaking down walls of division!

**2. Let the church challenge singles to take responsibility for their place in the church.** Lee suggests: "Singles will need some activism. In the spirit of forbearance they need to apply appropriate pressure on the church ministry. They will succeed as they match their activism with creative and Christlike lives." It may not be fair, but it is nevertheless true, that single people

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who want to be in the mainstream of church life need to take most of the initiative. One single mother, speaking to this need to take initiative, confessed that the hardest thing she ever did was to go to church the first Sunday after the separation from her husband. She now advises others: "Act as if there is a place for you in the church, even if there isn't. A place will open." However, not all persons have the courage of my friend.

I said I believe in the church. And I can give you reasons why.

1. A recently widowed woman felt herself buoyed up by the prayers of church members.

2. A young divorced man, after a retreat, felt he could begin to put his life together again.

3. A single woman has blossomed into a confident

leader because of the encouragement of the church.

4. A Christian family cares for abused and neglected children.

Dr. James Lynch in his book *The Broken Heart* documents the fact that lack of human companionship kills. And, conversely, human relationships are health-producing and life-giving. The church must not deny this human contact to a third of its members.

With affection for the church,

Herta Funk

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## Questions and Answers about Singleness

by Laverne Hostettler

This is about the single parent, particularly the single widowed parent. I ask the questions and the answers came from reading and from many persons over many years. Sometimes the answers are mine.

### What about the single parent in the U.S.?

The 1980 census is expected to show that the number of husbandless women heading families is now more than eight million, 50% greater than in 1970, that the traditional family of father, mother, and one or more children now makes up less than one-third of U.S. households.

### What are we doing about it?

Not much. Actually nobody wants to think about it, because in part that statistic means that marriages have ended by separation—death or dissolution. That is personally threatening; there is the possibility of "It could be us." In addition, many people find it difficult to recognize a widow as the head of a household. Every second household (or even every fifth household, as I tallied for one congregation) is headed by a woman; here are implications for society and the church. The subject is simply too big to think about in any reasonable way.

### Why limit the discussion to the widowed parent?

With death there is a finality to the separation. We face the ultimate question of life and death—of death as a part of life. We know there is no possibility of meeting again anywhere in this world. This is not easy to accept or understand or explain to children. With a separation there is always the unexpected encounter, the telephone calls, the need to arrange for meetings for parent and child, possible misunderstandings, explanations. There are other ways of limiting the discussion. One would be by the age of the children at the time of death: the widow with pre-school children, with high school or college age children, with children who have left home, the retired widow. When do you stop being a parent? Each age presents a different relationship. Each involves basic decisions, and most widows make them without a trusted person to consult.

### What does this mean in the work of the church?

What does it mean in 1981 to "care for the widow and

orphans"? What did it mean when Moses spoke about it? In the New Testament context? Jesus, on the cross, made arrangements for John to care for his mother. I think about that.

### Let's go to the possible groupings. What about those?

The widow with young children is the one person for whom there are some things written. She has less experience as a parent, may have no marketable skills, often has no financial resources except what she can produce. This means finding good child care, and coping with the demanding task of all of the work at home plus the job. At the same time, without much help unless she is fortunate in family and friends, she alone carries the responsibility for the care of her children.

### What about women with high school and college age children?

The high school and college years are high-expense times if you are committed to education. Even families with two incomes are finding it hard. Consider that in 1979 the median income for women working full time was \$10,168 compared to \$17,061 for men working full time.

This is the time when children start making decisions about work, find new friends, and move toward independent living. It is not always easy to keep the lines of communication open, and it is very difficult for the child unless there are friends, relatives, other caring people who provide a support system.

### And what about the widowed parent whose children are older?

For a woman whose children are gone from home there is often too much freedom. She needs to set new goals. What was legitimate for a husband and wife may be unrealistic for the woman alone. She may find herself looking for a valid vocation, a new life, and making many of the same decisions that her young adult children are making. There is often a role change. If the parent is fortunate, her children become friends.

The retired widow is getting considerable attention and some help. There are many depressing statistics: the 1978 census report shows that 28.8% of elderly

women living alone had incomes below the poverty line, compounded by substandard housing, low paying jobs, ill health.

This is the fastest growing age group presently, and no one is sure what to do. Children in their fifties and sixties are relating to a parent who is eighty or ninety years old. There aren't many role models here. They are just being made!

**Where do you as a single parent find your role models?**

I have a lovely aunt—in fact two aunts—who are widows. They are remarkable women. I learned, too, from a marvelous young widow whom I met when our sons started to first grade. She gave me lots of courage, although she might be surprised to know that, when I became a widow twenty-five years later. The role models are there.

**What would you like to say that hasn't been asked?**

With the large number of women who work outside their homes, with equal rights gains for women as well as minorities, with the dramatic increase in the number of households headed by women the attitudes in business and society are changing. Within the church, recognition of women's gifts and needs is uneven and slow, and is negligible for husbandless women.

**The question for the church is simply: what really is the Good News for the widowed mother, the single parent, the single person?**

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## Being a Single Professional in Mennonite Institutions

Joys and Hazards

by Imo Jeanne Yoder

"What does your husband teach?... There is single man whom I would like you to meet. ....Good, I'm glad you met that faculty wife; she is someone whom you would have something in common with since she was single for a long time and had a career....What, you chose to be single? I thought every woman wanted to be married!"

I hardly expected a red carpet welcome when I joined the faculty at a Mennonite college, but these greetings sharply contrasted with my expectations. None of my experiences had led me to believe that I would be labeled as such a deviation from the norm. My earliest contact with Mennonite single professionals in Mennonite institutions was with the order of deaconesses at Newton, Kansas. Observing these single women when I worked with them as a teenager led me to believe that pledging to give your energy to the Lord without distraction of a marriage was highly admired. My second contact with Mennonite institutions was as a graduate student. Never had I experienced such a sense of community in any institution. Marital status was not an issue.

Sensing that my expectations might be a bit unrealistic, I began to ask myself questions. I had not lived among Mennonites for many years, and I began to wonder if my understanding of the beliefs was incorrect. I had been told that Anabaptists view Christ as central to the gospel message. If so, how did the fact that Christ ushered in a new age on the issues of sex roles and singleness figure into Mennonites' belief system? Did they still follow the teachings of the Old Testament in this regard? If Christ's singleness is disregarded, no doubt the Apostle Paul is discounted as well. Where was the prophetic vision that should put Mennonite institutions ahead of the world rather than lagging many paces behind.

Disillusioned, I explained my plight. Nothing was heard except my discomfort at being labeled. A few married women shouted, "Do not run around with single women, or you will be labeled as an old maid." A

few single women said, "Do not run around with married women who are housewives. They are empty-headed baby machines." Another single woman warned, "Do not run around with single men your age. There is something wrong with a man who is unmarried." My married co-workers said, "Please confine your contacts with me to business hours. This institution is so demanding that my family is in danger of disintegrating from lack of nurture." The rest of the single women said, "Most spouses are jealous of us. We singles are threats to existing marriages."

Feeling forsaken and alone with my plight, I shouted, "Can't you people see that although labels are helpful in classifying the stimuli we receive, labels do not do justice to the uniqueness and dynamic quality of persons? Why can't you break down the barriers?" The echo of my words bounced off the mountains, and I stood alone.

As I saw the boundaries of my world shrinking around me, I searched for an exit, which either would take me back to a city where singleness was the "in thing" or to the Mennonite church I had recently joined. There I had been treated as a special person and affirmed because of the particular contributions I could make as a single. The exits were blocked. In desperation I cried out, "God, why hast thou forsaken me?" A voice replied, "Do not spend energy worrying about what people think. Their comments are helpful because they tell you where they are, and you do not have to guess. Live beyond stereotypes. Both marriage and singleness are gifts. Both can contribute to the Kingdom."

"Lord, I appreciate your message, but I have to deal with my self-esteem; it has been diminished. Let me talk to single professionals in other Mennonite institutions and then I'll listen to what you have to say." The single voices in other institutions primarily had three major kinds of advice. First, do all of your dating discreetly so no one can match you up; married persons

think we are all dying to get married. Secondly, if you want to continue to work in a Mennonite institution, marry whether you want to or not as marriage is seen as God's ordained purpose. Third, since you are a single professional woman, no doubt you will be labeled as a feminist, and if you accept that label and perhaps even promote it, some protection will be afforded.

"Lord, you see I needed that advice....What are you saying, Lord? Why don't I turn my singleness into an advantage rather than wasting my energy playing games? I am, Lord. Just wait until you see the warning sign I am going to post for all other singles to see."

**Please read the sign before you enter this institution**

Caution: Enter at your own risk. This is a family-oriented world. You are regarded as half a person if you are single. We want you to become a whole person and achieve happiness. We have your best interests in mind. It is our belief that marriage is a prerequisite to happiness. We practice community here; that means assessing each relationship you have with someone of the opposite gender as a romantic possibility. If you choose to be single, we will expect you to become married to the institution.

"Lord, see my sign?... It is hard to see you through my sign. What do you mean I need to break down the barriers? Are you trying to tell me that you want me to *dialogue* with the persons here about my singleness? O.K., Lord, if you insist I will accept some speaking engagements, but I expect nothing but flack from the persons here. It is like a private club and the membership requirement is marriage.

"Lord, today I was on my way to talk on the subject of being whole and single, and a colleague said he did not think it is possible to be single and whole. I knew it, Lord. No one would understand.... Well, you're right. The talk did go well. Yes, I remember that student who waited for me outside the door after the speech. She spoke with urgency. Yes, she came to my office today and poured out her heart. She did tell me that you sent me into her life as the minister to singles on this campus. Yes, I did have that sense of joy that occurs when you have connected with someone in a special way.

"Lord, there are many invitations to talk to classes and groups about my singleness. I even get asked to speak about sexuality and dating. More and more students are seeking me out. They say, 'Please help me deal with my increasingly intense sexual drives. I thought you would better know how to help me with this than a married person.' Should I devote my life fully to Kingdom work with having to juggle the multiple loyalties marriage requires? That means breaking off a relationship and disappointing my parents. I am afraid to talk to one of the married faculty about this; they might not understand.

Lord, I see what you mean. There are joys here. Giving that cup of cold water in your name is what it is all about. But, Lord, there are too many voices out there. Many students are afraid to return to their home

communities without a spouse. Over and over, students are saying that they wish they had more models in their congregation who feel good about their singleness and are positive and optimistic. So many females tell me that their whole idea of their self-worth has been dependent on finding the man of their dreams. You're right, Lord, maybe a presence is the only way I can touch some lives. I wish more single professionals would be brave enough to risk coming here. There are so many persons who need someone they can call on in their times of crisis.

"Lord, I must be honest with you. The joys are not all in giving. Once I learned to use my singleness to an advantage to meet some of my own needs, I became much more content. I used to be very introspective, and analyzed life rather than lived it. Lord, now I want to tell you about specific joys I found here. Working in a church institution has given me opportunity to work at achieving more of a balance between the inward/outward journey.

"Lord, most of all, my sojourn in a Mennonite institution has resulted in an abundance of friends in a variety of age ranges. I never really appreciated the freedom I had to spend time and energy developing friendships until some of my married friends made me aware of this.

"Lord, there are many other joys in being a single professional in a Mennonite institution as long as I focus on the positive aspects rather than dwell on the negative.

"Lord, help me to continue to break down the barriers by dialoguing with persons whenever the opportunity presents itself. Finally, Lord, thank you for the opportunity to write this article and for the single professionals in other Mennonite institutions who have given me the courage to risk being misunderstood."

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## **Hedgerows and Parenting**

*by Connie Kreider*

Those of you with rural backgrounds conjure an image when you think of hedgerows. I think of a particular one that ran alongside the wheat field. It wasn't particularly striking in the fall. It was just there and well established by the time I took notice. Lowlying shrubs had grown up alongside and provided refuge for many prairie creatures. Shrubs had grown strong and dense; with the trees they created a sturdy enclosure for cattle, horses, and new spring calves, protecting them from wandering away during their grazing. In my experience with single-parenting, the church is analogous to that hedgerow.

Single-parenting is not something I would have chosen. The media re-enforces a negative image. Two months ago I picked up yet another publication (this

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one Mennonite) which contained a reprint from *The School Administrator* (September 1980). It, too, predicted gloom for children of one-parent families. They "have lower academic achievement ratings, are more likely to be late, truant, or subject to disciplinary action than children from two-parent homes. They are also more likely to drop out of school....The school is the single most important source of continuity in the lives of children whose families are coming apart."

Articles like this strike a deep chord within me because I hope that my child will suffer as few negative effects from my divorce as possible. I want to dispel that negative prediction. (I should say that she attended a nursery school that focused on development of a healthy self-concept; I am grateful.)

At the same time I do not dispute the fact that single-parenting is difficult. At times it would be nice to have someone step in and help. Of all my parental cares, I most need to feel support in discipline and moral growth of my child. I also need space and time for myself, to get "filled up" again, because I teach young children and then come home and again need to provide nurture, cheerfulness, and warmth. Satisfying adult contact—a basic need—is doubly important after long tiring days.

These parental concerns sometimes do not differ so much in degree. I have often felt my load lighter, as a single parent of one, than that of my friends who cares for three children while her husband travels extensively. She in many ways is a single parent. The major difference is that because I have chosen at this point not to remarry I feel guilt at times that I am denying my child the experience of a "normal" family.

### Always There Is Growth

One grows through challenging circumstances; God allows inner strengths to emerge that might not have otherwise. And the joys of parenting—the smiles, the gifts of hand-picked flowers, the drawings, the I-love-yous, the deep satisfaction of nurturing—are ever present and in themselves provide sustenance.

My church relationships through this experience have been examples of God's love. People have cared for me and my former mate who also experienced much pain. They helped me through a transition period by being there: my daughter and I were frequently invited out for meals, included in social gatherings, called and visited. Seminary courses helped me grow in faith and in self-understanding.

My daughter has also been nurtured by the church. She had a year's experience in Sunday school in which she received letters and papers in the mail for those Sundays of absence due to visiting her father. She continues to be surrounded by caring, sensitive teachers. Our church is filled with thoughtful people who have filled in as a father-substitute at programs, who provide positive male relationships in her life, and who have checked with me about sensitive topics pursued ruining the children's time of worship. She is blessed to be in a congregation where the following are privileges of all children: 1) To be in the midst of the congregation, not

on the sidelines; 2) To wander among us during worship, being the responsibility of each of us; 3) To give answers during children's time without being laughed at; 4) To be called by name by each adult; 5) To be a valued person in the congregation; 6) To be led to faith by the Christ-like care and modeling of each adult. The church has been a vital source of hope, encouragement, and support to us both. As I watch her grow and blossom, I'm grateful. I feel very blessed.

Just as the hedgerows offer refuge to prairie creatures, I feel the church continues to visibly shelter and nurture us.

*Connie Kreider says, "I teach first grade children in Goshen, Indiana. This is my fourth year of single parenting. My daughter, Aimee, is entering kindergarten this year. We presently attend the Assembly Mennonite Church. Members of the Eighth Street Mennonite Church and College Mennonite Church have been a part of the larger church family."*

## The Option to Remain Single

by Brenda Stoltzfus

Over the past two years I have been invited to at least fifteen weddings. I am happy for my friends and relatives getting married. It is cause for celebration, but at the same time I am troubled by the expectations placed on me.

With an interesting blend of curiosity and concern, I am frequently questioned as to the existence of a "relationship" with the opposite sex. It is the *reaction* to my response that disturbs me. When I attempt to explain my thoughts on choosing to remain single for life, I am either not taken seriously or told I will someday meet the "right" man and be swept off my feet. Making a choice to remain single is very often not considered legitimate, and I contend that one can make such a decision with the same integrity, understanding, and joy as in entering marriage. (Before discussing the elements of my decision, I would like to make it clear that this decision is still very much in process. Just as I consider myself unprepared for marriage, a lifelong commitment to singleness is at present premature.)

The reasons behind a single lifestyle fall into four categories: rebellion, feminism, preference, and commitment. Some carry more importance, but each enters in. Rebellion may be called the seed in my thinking. Societal pressure to marry begins quite early and as I became aware of that pressure I soon began to react against it, declaring from a young age my intention of not marrying or at least not until I was twenty-five. The older I got and the more pressure I felt, the stronger my reaction became. Fortunately, my parents allowed me the freedom to see singleness as an option and did not themselves put pressure on me. Instead, they encouraged me to look at all sides of the issue and were ready to dialogue with me. How much of this "reaction" is simply a part of my personality I do not know, for I do see

it showing up in other areas of my life; it sparked my thinking and continues to do so.

First, rebellion in itself is not a legitimate reason for remaining single, but it does have merit when combined with others. Initially, the reaction was enough, but it eventually forced me to look hard at the societal expectations placed on women and do some evaluating. As I became more aware and concerned about women's issues and began to call myself a feminist, I also applied that to my thinking about remaining single and it fit quite well. Women who never marry are frequently stereotyped as frigid, maladjusted, and incomplete. This needs to change. Wholeness does not come in a package deal with marriage; on the contrary, both married and single people need to work at individual wholeness. Henri Nouwen comments that no other human being can understand us, fully, or meet our deepest needs so that finding wholeness within oneself is crucial (*Clowning in Rome*, p. 41). Thus, the expectation placed on a woman that she must find a husband to be complete is both false and destructive to relationships; yet it still remains, in a sometimes subtle, sometimes blatant way.

Holding marriage up as the ultimate goal for a woman's fulfillment is also destructive. The woman is supposed to find happiness in the home and in serving her husband. Granted, some changes are taking place and married women are more often given the freedom to work outside the home and have a career but the pressures against that are still evident; the single woman is freer to pursue a career and be active in pushing for change. We need both married and single women, but since the number of women remaining single is still lower, I will choose the road "less traveled by."

There is the sad lack of positive role models of single women. Not until college did I encounter women whom I respected and could look to as role models of a single lifestyle, and by that time I was already thinking seriously about singleness. During high school when I was more confused in what I thought, I had no one to model any option other than marriage. The models I found in college have been a tremendous encouragement to me and I see the need for more women to provide examples of an alternative to marriage. Thus, in the future, I hope also to become, to the best of my ability, an example of living as a single person in a positive way.

Third, preference is something most people can understand for a limited time, but not for life. While realizing that my thoughts, feelings, and wishes are subject to change, I also see both marriage and singleness as having positive and negative traits, but with singleness outweighing marriage as an option for life. I firmly believe everyone should spend some time as a single person, living away from home before marriage. I happen to enjoy singleness enough to want to continue it indefinitely. As a single person one has more freedom of choice since there is only one person ultimately involved in decision making instead of a spouse and family. The single person also has more time to use as she chooses. This does not mean that the single person

is any less busy; that depends on what she decides to do with that time.

A preference for singleness may be related to my own personality. I have always enjoyed solitude and have consciously cultivated it so that not marrying does not possess as much of a threat to me as it does to some others my own age. I also see the possibility of somewhat greater freedom to develop a variety of close relationships although I would hope marriage need not stifle that freedom. I do, at times, desire the benefits of marriage and that will probably happen throughout life, but remaining single seems natural and in accordance with my perception of myself. When I think about and plan for my future, I rarely consider marriage.

Fourth, the deepest level of a decision I may make to remain single is commitment to God, and an increasing sense of calling. I am not always certain what shape or form that calling will take, but over the past few years I have become more convinced that singleness is to play a definite and important role. In identifying singleness as part of my Christian commitment, I in no way intend to place it on a higher religious plane than marriage. I affirm the validity and importance of both singles and marrieds as committed disciples of Christ, but in seeking to be faithful I am finding a personal calling to remain single. Understanding the implications of a sense of calling has been and continues to be difficult and explaining it even more difficult. At the present time the most I can do is continue to search and trust God to provide guidance.

As I continue to consider a choice such as this one, I would ask some things of my family, friends, church, and society. Probably the most important requests are that I be recognized as a whole person and be taken seriously as I process my thinking. The stereotypes and expectations, particularly concerning wholeness, placed on singles causes a tension in relationships which needs to be overcome so that we can relate on a more honest level. I would also request acceptance, understanding, and support just as I would hope these are given to someone contemplating marriage or someone already married.

One other aspect that is often overlooked for someone choosing or thinking about singleness is dialogue. Most couples have premarital counseling; I have yet to hear of a single person having anything comparable and I wonder if some kind of counseling with another single person might be something to consider. Along with this there might be public acknowledgement in which positive affirmation and joy are expressed, just as in a marriage ceremony. Many of these ideas are only in the beginning stages and should be discussed and thought about further. The church in particular should be pioneering the way for acceptance of a single lifestyle but has sadly been a place where singles felt most isolated.

I have many dreams for life and one of them includes the freedom to choose singleness without stigma attached and to live as a creative, fulfilled, and joyful person.

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Brenda Stoltzfus grew up in Lancaster County, attended Bart Mennonite Church until leaving for college where she became a member of the Assembly in Goshen, Indiana. She will graduate from Goshen College in December 1981 and remain in the area for a few years. During her final year and one-half she was a student assistant for the Campus Ministries Team; this was good experience in relation to long range plans to attend seminary.

*Brenda was one of the coordinators for Women's Emphasis Week last fall at Goshen College. See "News and Verbs."*

## Not By Default, Now Single

by Vida Landis

In the Mennonite Church community, I have heard very few speak on the gift of singleness. Much is said about marriage being an example of Christ's love for the church. At times, this truth is so over emphasized that singleness is considered incomplete and immature. I believe that each of us is created in the image of God and that completeness is not dependent on one's marital status. Paul uses the work "gift" when referring to singleness in 1 Corinthians 7:7,8 (NIV). "I wish that all men were as I am. But each man has his own gift from God; one has this gift, another has that. Now to the unmarried and the widows I say: It is good for them to stay unmarried, as I am."

Is the gift of singleness something only to be reflected upon after years of longing for a husband, when facing the reality of your fiftieth birthday single? Or can it be embraced and celebrated now as a gift, not by default, whether or not it be permanent?

What does it mean to celebrate being single? In my experience, singleness continues to be a pilgrimage that at times is misunderstood in the church. Celebrating means thanking God for purpose in my life, *not* evaluating God's faithfulness to me by whether or not I have a husband in the future. It means thanking God for the unique opportunities of sharing with many people because there was space at a table or in a car for just one person. It means knowing and being known by the couples and families in my life. It means designing projects to increase understanding for those in the church who persist with their comments such as, "Don't worry, your turn's coming," whenever my singleness becomes the topic of discussion. It means living free of the compulsion to prove that being single or married is more honorable. It means living responsibly with the gifts and callings God has given me.

At the age of twenty-three I joined the ranks of the many single Mennonite women serving abroad. As I left, I heard words of sadness because I was going single. In Africa, I was impressed by the way God had used both marrieds and singles. I think I saw and experienced the wholesome interaction of both groups in the family of God. At times when that was not true and each group

became isolated from each other, our witness as a group of believers was hindered. I will always be deeply indebted to those singles in my life at that time who were not afraid or ashamed to talk about the meaning (both joy and pain) of the gift of singleness—and their ministry in particular. There are also special bonds with families who have and are helping me to celebrate being single.

Part of my pilgrimage has been through classrooms and dorm-room discussions at Eastern Mennonite College. I participated in a panel discussion in the class called "Man and Woman" in which I was the youngest single person responding to the question, "What does it mean to you to be single?" For me it was a risky moment in front of other college men and women. The discussion that followed helped me to understand that we are conditioned (even in the church) not to talk about singleness until we are in the mid-forties. I was also distressed at the number of young women who spent so much time in their search for a man that graduation approached without many of their gifts being unwrapped and experienced; they live with the notion of incompleteness unless marriage immediately follows graduation. The mission of the church is crippled by such irresponsibility of individuals and any structures that encourage such.

In society I can expect to be misunderstood; in the church, I want neither sympathy nor pampering for my single state. But I am very interested in living responsibly in the body and being content in whatever state I am. The following thoughts I want to share in the form of a letter to a special friend. The experience makes me more than ever conscious of how couple-oriented our society and church are.

"Before we met, I had begun to celebrate the meaning of being a daughter of the Lord...as a single person for then. One of the things I valued in our friendship was our honesty. Wanting to be sure that God was leading in our lives, we asked hard questions of each other in spite of the many wedding bell wishers. I thank God for the particular dimensions of those days. To nurture such honesty at this moment and on this subject is not easy.

"In those days of our special friendship, mission boards, friends, and church folks often asked me about future plans. Now many of the wedding bell wishers of our partnership days are awkward with my presence as a single. So my new job is a safe subject for their questions. Believe it or not, it was three months after we were no longer dating that one brave woman at church asked me if you and I were still special friends. I remember that I breathed a sigh of relief: that someone finally verbalized the question spelled on their faces. (Others had only managed to ask my parents.) This journeying has led me to Sunday school supper in which the Newlywed Game was the major activity of one evening I kept score for the eight couples. I continue to be challenged in the art of loving.

"You may wonder why I've dared to be so gutsy. Before you attach any label, you must also remember that I've cared for and prayed with many couples in dating, engaged, married, and separated states. I've joined them in prayers for their children (the hoped for, the



soon to be born, and the living ones). I love to be with couples who are still in love. They are free to love me as a person and their partnership is not threatened by my singleness. I have many times been blessed by the ministry of Christian couples.

"I share this letter publicly for those who have cried tears of joy at hearing someone articulate the pain of living in communities that find partnership as most acceptable. Part of this I write in tribute to those persons both single and married who have helped me talk about my singleness and who affirmed my personhood as a single women in my twenties. Part of this I write with tears for those in the middle decades of life

for whom there was little or no support in the church if one did not have a partner. I write to increase the awareness of young persons deciding on partnership that they might respond to marriage because God leads...not simply responding to the pressure to be other than single.

"I am thankful that you and other special friends have been a part of my life's experiences that in this reflection of my journeying it is not one of sour grapes, but one that gives me both great joy and pain to share."

*Vida Landis, Coatsville, Pennsylvania, is a nurse and a former missionary to Africa.*

## My Eyes Were Opened

*by Ann Lengacher Reschly*

In a college "Women's Issues" class, forty-fifty women and six-seven men were asked to identify a woman who had been influential in their lives. The majority of the women mentioned were single.

As I review my attitudes toward singles from childhood to the time of my first child's birth, I remember with chagrin and regret my tendency to ignore single older women in our small church—they just didn't fit neatly into any niche in our nuclear-family oriented congregation. I remember the struggle through the dating age when the value of a girl seemed to hinge on which boys were interested in her, and my later curiosity about why some woman wasn't married—(would someone actually *choose* to remain single?).

Women in this culture are so identified by their relationships with men—who or what their father, husband, or son is or has done. An "unattached" woman is disconcerting to some people; where and how does this single woman fit into the pattern of relating? Time for change is long overdue.

In the first 18-24 months of being a mother I had time for reading and thinking through some issues that had arisen since I had married and become a parent. I began to realize that I had never been my own person. I had been my parent's daughter, then my husband's wife, and now, in addition, I was my son's mother. In return for what I was to each of these people, I was expecting them to bring me fulfillment and happiness. This realization resulted in much struggle. I experienced anger, bitterness, defensiveness, and—especially—confusion because all these feelings were closely entangled with the deep love I felt for my husband, son, and parents. There were many times of peace in our small family, but there was also upheaval as I dug through layers of my roles to find the core, the center, that was my own self. As I began to know and respect myself more and experience self-acceptance and independence, I found my relationships becoming fuller and richer. I was able to *give* in those relationships, not just be passively taken from or given to. The struggle leads to self-responsibility. Independence allows for interdependence—giving, loving, caring, sharing, accepting who others are and what they bring to me.

My acceptance of others as valued persons, all being

with the same Creator, with differences from and likenesses to myself, of course, encompasses singles.

I now view singles as whole person, persons of value, individuals with whom I can relate and from whom I can learn many things. It seems as though I have been in contact with more singles recently than previously (or am I just not ignoring them any longer?). At times I envy singles in that their schedules seem more open. I now have two children and the same loving husband who has struggled and changed with me through the years. I love each of them deeply and am glad for their liveliness. However, I do occasionally wonder wistfully what it would be like to consider only my own schedule, or to dive into a project and be able to stick with it without interruption, or go to work or appointments without having to consider the need for quality child care. Most important to consider is that we are all persons, all women, married or single, and we must respect and value one another; our culture too often has not.

I have hope for the future of women. As I grew to know a number of the women in the above mentioned class, I was challenged and strengthened and blessed. There are young college women these days who respect themselves and others, who are becoming aware of the rich history of women, who are prepared to push back the barriers and boundaries that have constricted women. These young women are looking for the path in life that will lead to fulfillment, challenge, and joy. And many are *not* bound by the belief that to have a fulfilled and joyful life, a woman must be married. This freeing attitude is supported by some older women who care enough to make themselves open and vulnerable, to communicate from their experiences. My respect, concern, and love for many women, married or single, has grown, strengthened and reinforced by relationships formed in that recent class. My hope is that women, married and single, will continue to reach out to one another, continuing to dispel the myths and inequities that often serve to divide us.

*Ann Lengacher Reschly parents two sons and works out of the home as a nurse.*

## Two Adventures in Single-Adoptive Parenting

I was asked, "Will she stay with you?"

I no longer feel single. My five-year-old daughter is a constant reminder. I frequently find myself referring to "when I was single."

The passage from singleness to single parenting was not without struggle. Close to the time of my adopted child's arrival I found myself strangely sad. In time I understood that I was grieving the loss of my singleness; I was closing one chapter of my life.

The adoption process was straightforward and helpful, also shorter than I had anticipated. I had been leery of inquiring at the agency for fear of rejection. I found that single applicants are not the last desperate choices of the agency, but evaluated with the same criteria as any two-parent application.

As soon as news of my intention to adopt a child became public I felt support and affirmation. Alongside that came a trickling of some rather odd questions: "You mean they actually allow single 'girls' to adopt?" "Where will she stay—with you?" "Will that be full time?"

How do I do it? Very much like most parents, I suspect, except for the additional reliance on and support from friends. Friends have been the people with whom I shared the joy of my child's improved articulating and understanding, my excitement at her learning to skate, to ride a two-wheeler, and to swim. With them I shared the frustrations and pitfalls of toilet training and the evidences of strengthened bonds and love.

My child was four-years-old when she came to my home. Consequently discipline needed to start on our first meeting so that our life together would not seem or become too helter-skelter. Developing a comfortable discipline has had its bad times for both of us. For me it has become crucial to discuss child-raising and observe other parents in it. Fortunately my child forgives quickly and thereby also gives me courage to keep working at my parenting techniques.

Finding a balance between energy for work and energy for family life has been a constant concern. I determined prior to the arrival of my child that my first concern would be at home at the risk of jeopardizing job satisfaction. It has been difficult at times to give as much as I felt necessary at work and still be an adequate parent. I feel the first years of an adoption are very significant for laying the basis of a parent-child relationship. I am dealing with it by seeking to stay with part-time employment for these early years. To date my job also has been flexible enough to permit me to stay at home when my child was sick or when it seemed for other reasons best to be at home with her.

Perhaps the most trying aspect of single parenting has been to adjust to having a little person around all the time. Quickly going to the grocery store before guests arrive to get one litre of milk can be a test of patience. It may mean trying to find a certain pair of shoes, remembering to go to the bathroom—meanwhile listening to a constant stream of verbiage.

Private time for me must be carefully scheduled and explained. As a single person I appreciated very much

the freedom for solitude when I needed it. Now I must find new ways to find this kind of time alone. On several occasions a friend and I have worked out exchange sitting services whereby we both had a day at home all to ourselves!

An issue that has come even more to my attention since becoming a parent is the unspoken about dilemma of by what name to call a single person. In doctors' offices every married woman regardless of age is called on as Mrs. In my experience a single woman is inevitably referred to on a first name basis. I can recall only two times being introduced to children as Miss Loeppky. On rare occasions, of course, people will ask how I wish to be introduced to a child. In the community where I now live married persons, however, are without question introduced to children or referred to in the presence of children as Mr. or Mrs. I have gone by the rule of thumb that if people's children call me by my first name then they do not mind me introducing my child to them on a first name basis. The incongruity is that most other children refer to their friends' parents as Mr. or Mrs. I suspect soon my child will recognize this. I have not come up with a comfortable solution.

Another important aspect of single parenting is the need to deal with the absence of the one parent—in our case a father. This means two concrete things. For one, I need to explain and give words for my child to explain the one-parent family situation. I have found that at age five this does not require a wordy explanation: Where is your dad? I don't have one. Why? Because my mommy isn't married.

The other necessary element is the exposure to and relationship with persons who can provide the type of father image that is satisfactory and good. My child has chosen one of our male friends and one of her uncles as her "pretend daddys." She likes to watch them work, play with them, and call them daddy while being with them.

In preparation for becoming a parent I tried to anticipate the whole spectrum of emotions, turmoil, and changes that this new relationship might hold. There have been surprises. As in any intimate relationship the "give and take" is reciprocal. My child is the dependent in our relationship, yet I find myself receiving generously. My eyes have been opened to see more of the world around me than my adult eyes are used to seeing. I have been encouraged to respond with more integrity to the world and to God. I also am giving, and not only meals, clean clothes, and band-aids; I am transmitting values and beliefs that have grown out of my experiences. Parenting holds deep satisfaction for me.

*Rosalie Loeppky teaches at Rosthern (Saskatchewan) Junior College.*

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## "I Watched Her Make New Footsteps in New Snow"

About twelve years ago I picked up a *Reader's Digest* and read an article entitled "Bachelor Mother." I was intrigued. An anesthetist, unmarried, had adopted three children—one part Chinese, another part prairie Indian, and the third purely Caucasian. Although her role as breadwinner-homemaker was demanding, she had never felt so rewarded.

My interest sparked. I loved children and I knew something about parenting skills by observation and from reading. I started investigating various possibilities.

The subject of single-parent adoption popped up repeatedly in magazine articles and books—even in a 19th-century Spanish novel.

After contacting the local county children's services with negative results, I tried another county. Here again I was not given much hope, but a home study was completed. My life and background were thoroughly investigated. Then came a long period of waiting.

Two years passed. It was useless to wait any longer, I felt. There were hundreds of school-age children in a home in Canada who needed adoptive homes. I would write and find out what a U.S. citizen would have to do in order to adopt. On the very day I was going to write, the social worker who had made my home study called and asked if I would like to meet Stacy! From that moment, events moved fast. I visited her twice a week to take her out to eat and to become acquainted. She visited me over the weekends. Within three weeks she was ready to move in. This was a tremendous change for a nine-year-old to make—to leave classmates and friends in the children's home and to become part of a new family. But the first night, she went to sleep smiling; and I had an indescribable feeling that the "impossible" was happening—I had a nine-year-old daughter.

Contact was maintained with social workers for a year. Then the adoption was finalized before the probate judge. This does not mean that there had been any possibility of turning back; for me it was final from the moving-in day. The year of waiting to finalize the adoption was merely a legal technicality.

About a year after Stacy's arrival, as we were driving home together, she said, "It doesn't seem like I'm adopted. It seems as if I've always been here!" Meaningful moments included prayer time. What could be more impressive than her prayer on the eve of Mother's Day, thanking God that I had adopted her?

We now have our own home and plot of ground with a garden and trees. (I had never owned a tree before.) My mother and my father moved to Ohio for about a year and supervised the building of our small three-bedroom house. We did some of the finish work such as painting and varnishing.

After the grass sprouted, we raked off the straw which had been used as protection for the new lawn. With a spurt of creativity, Stacy built a straw hut under the trees at the edge of the yard. She ingeniously used sticks for the frame, and tied the bunches of straw on it with pieces of string. It required hours of concentrated work—but the result was an original house and a feeling of accomplishment.

On another occasion—this time after a blizzard—Stacy and a couple of neighborhood friends spent hours digging out the inside of a huge drift to make a snow house. Then came hot chocolate and sandwiches in an igloo, complete with benches of ice and snow!

Many people have given me support in my role as a parent. First of all, the social workers helped build my self-confidence by giving me positive reinforcement and by showing that they believed in my ability. I also felt a great deal of support from younger single and married friends. As a welcome for Stacy, owners of the apartment I was renting at the time gave a beautiful arrival party and shower.

We have several special days to celebrate each year. Besides birthdays we commemorate "Moving-in Day", which happens to fall on St. Patrick's Day; and Adoption Day, the date on which the papers were finalized.

Sometimes comments are made which cannot even be slightly appreciated. Upon finding out what our relationship is, an unknowing person will say to Stacy, "Oh, I didn't know you were adopted! You don't look like you are adopted!" We feel that a child should be accepted, adopted or biological, without any preconceived ideas. Of course, I have similar feelings about being a single parent. Singles should be accepted on par with couples.

Recently I was asked to participate in a Sunday school class discussion on single parenting. I was given a book to read as background. I realized that single adoptive parents do not really fit into the described categories of single parents described: widows and divorcees. The book approached single parenting as a problematic situation. Actually for me, being a single parent has been great, a growing and learning experience.

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## Jobs that Need Doing

1. When you have finished reading this *Report*, spread the word: pass it on to your pastor. (Also, feel free to photocopy it.)

2. If you are a woman in the General Conference Mennonite Church, consider applying for one of the two positions on the MCC Task Force on Women in Church and Society becoming available in the summer of 1982. State your interest in writing to Ron Flickinger, 21 S. 12, Akron, PA 17501, by 15 March 1982. (The task force is made up of six women: two each from the Mennonite Church, the Mennonite Brethren General Conference, and the General Conference Mennonite Church—and of these three are from Canada and three from United States.) You would be asked to attend the two meetings of the task force each year, and periodically compile feature material for *Report*.

3. Consider studying for a Ph.D or a Th.D in biblical and related studies. Write Bible studies especially for use in women's groups.

4. Encourage women you know who enjoy biblical studies to continue their schooling.

5. Pray for the people who will be going to the 1984 Mennonite World Conference in Strasbourg.

The extended family makes the single adoption a workable situation. I could not be a single parent in isolation. It is necessary for my child to have aunts, uncles, cousins, grandparents, and even great-aunts and uncles. (When we went to my parents' fiftieth wedding anniversary celebration, I took Stacy by the hand and took her around the room to explain the relationship of each person; and she was interested in every one of them.)

Every single mother's child needs individuals to provide a positive father image. In my case these have been my father and a brother-in-law who lives about twenty miles away.

As a single parent I have not felt that being alone in the responsibilities of discipline and teaching has been a major frustration. The aspect of being in charge of everything is, for me, more of a challenge than a frustration. For example, last fall we needed a new supply of wood chips around the house and in a rock garden. I was unable to find someone to help haul the chips from a nearby saw mill and unload them, so I rented a pick-up from a generous farmer, obtained the chips, and Stacy and I spent two hours unloading them.

We raced with the clock to finish before dark.

The joys of parenting are much greater than the frustrations. I have learned a great deal about a child's need for security. I have had the opportunity to provide a stable family setting for the most important person in my world. I have had the joy of seeing Stacy make a commitment to Christ and grow in an understanding of the Christian life.

The years have passed rapidly, and Stacy is now looking forward to her junior year in high school. She is considering college. Last summer we spent a few weeks in "voluntary service" at a children's home in Mexico.

There is a scene which is symbolic of how I feel about adoption. A beautiful January snow had completely blanketed the ground. Before anyone had broken the surface of the snow, Stacy set out down the drive, making new footsteps in new snow. Looking out the window through cut-paper snowflakes, I was overwhelmed with a sense of what "home" meant and with gratitude for what I had been given—an opportunity to have a home in which to guide the ever new footsteps of a family member.

by Martha Kanagy

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## News and Verbs

The MCC Task Force on Women in Church and Society met in Kitchener, Ontario, in October. A headline decision was made to publish a collection of "artists' approach to women's concerns." (See announcement on this page.) Current task force members are **Esther Wiens**, Winnipeg, and **Karen Neufeld**, Hillsboro, Kansas, from the Mennonite Brethren; **Martha Smith Good**, New Hamburg, Ontario, and **Bertha Beachy**, Goshen, Indiana, from the Mennonite Church; and **Edith Krause**, Vancouver, and **Rosie Epp**, Wichita, Kansas, from the General Conference Mennonite Church.

**Lois Kreider**, North Newton, Kansas, is on a special ten-month MCC assignment: being available to self-help and used-goods shops; visiting existing shops; helping start new ones (there are now seventy-one in U.S. and Canada); conducting workshops for volunteers; encouraging workers to interpret the work of MCC to customers; and editing a related newsletter, *Shop Talk*.

**Erma Martin Yost** of New York City opened her sixth New York exhibition on November 10; it is entitled "Life Cycle Series," an unusual showing of fabric patchwork panels combined with oil paintings, juxtaposing abstract and figurative forms. Erma presents seven different stages of a woman's life: beginning with a fetus quietly awaiting birth, and concluding with sun-bleached bones returning to the earth.

**Katie Funk Wiebe** was in Manitoba in autumn to speak at the Manitoba Sunday School Convention of the General Conference Mennonite Church in Winkler (subject: "How We Welcome Secularism into Our Churches and Homes"), to conduct two workshops on "Making Adult Education Adult," to speak at three fund-raising banquets for Elim Bible Institute in Altona, and to give some chapel talks.

The 140-member Argentine (South America) Lutheran Church has become the first Lutheran conference to ordain a woman to the ministry.

**Betsy Beyler**, Washington, D.C., addressed the Inter-Collegiate Peace Fellowship (Bluffton, Ohio, October 22-24) on the subject of the workings of the U.S. government and ways in which Mennonites use their office in Washington to relate to government.

**Denise Hostetler**, Louisville, Ohio; **Carolyn Kanagy**, Mt. Gilead, Ohio; and **Judith Kauffman**, Exeland, Wisconsin; are among the seven Mennonite Disaster Service volunteers who are serving in a Hurtsboro, Alabama, tornado recovery project and a Miami and South Florida project for Cuban and Haitian refugee housing needs.

**Murphy Davis** is a Presbyterian minister in Atlanta, Georgia, whose work is devoted to condemned prisoners and their families. Her ministry is also to imprisoned women in Georgia, some of whom have no one else to visit them.

On Holy Thursday 1981 three people entered the offices of U.S. Secretary of State Alexander Haig and there performed the rite of exorcism. **Theresa Guisti** of Massachusetts, **Macy Morse**, a grandmother from New Hampshire, and **Tom Reed** of Jonah House in Baltimore miraculously got past the guards.

**Laura Litwillere**, MCC volunteer from Delavan, Illinois, led a project of hand pollination of date palms four months before harvest, bringing a 27-fold increase in date production from 1980 to 1981 in Garissa, Kenya.

**Dotty Janzen**, Hillsboro, Kansas, was ordained to the ministry at Trinity Church in June. She and her husband are co-pastors. She also teaches part time at Tabor College, and coordinates the Conference Based Seminary Program of South Central (MC) and Western District (GC) Conferences by which graduate-level theological courses are being taught in central Kansas.

**Laura Dube**, Port Lavaca, Texas, has been appointed secretary for the reorganized South Texas Mennonite Disaster Service Committee, and was project director for flood response in Austin in July.

**Mary Cosby**, one of the nine founding members of the Church of the Savior, Washington, D.C., delivered a series of lectures at Eden Theological Seminary, Enid, Oklahoma, earlier this year. In September she gave the Staley Distinguished Christian Lectures at Bethel College, North Newton, Kansas.

**Esther Patkau**, former missionary to Japan, is associate pastor of First Mennonite Church in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan.

**Ruth Brunk Stoltzfus**, Harrisonburg, Virginia, spoke on "Love God and Others" at the Franconia Conference Women's Missionary and Service Commission retreat last September.

**Senta Todoroff** is the new director of the Inter-Mennonite Children's Choir of Waterloo, Ontario, replacing Helen Martens, founder and director for fourteen years.

**Linda Calvin**, Des Moines, Iowa, has written an "American History Curriculum, Emphasis on Peace and Freedom and Humanitarianism." The Iowa branch of Women's International League for Peace and Freedom financed the typing of the 300-page manuscript. The text is being used in Urbandale High School.

**Minh Mhuyen Kauffman**, West Point, Nebraska, designed a brightly colored banner for the Balwadi ("Children's Garden") program, one of the most promising areas of service of the Village Reconstruction Organization in Bangladesh. On the banner, children are at the center of a cartwheel, forming the axis; "nutrition," "education," and "production" serve as spokes; and making up the rim are the responsibilities taken by the people of the villages.

**Margaret Foth**, Harrisonburg, Virginia, received the Association for Retarded Citizens Community Media Award for five radio programs on "Your Time" entitled "Mentally Retarded: Real People."

**Amanda Friesen**, Mountain Lake, Minnesota, has published poetry in a volume entitled *Reflections from Tranquil Waters*.

**Kathryn Troyer**, Hesston, Kansas, is the new editor of *Conference Messenger*, bi-monthly publication of the South Central Conference of the Mennonite Church.

**Edith Herr**, Leola, Pennsylvania, has been named Handicapped Professional Woman of the Year. She has written Sunday school lessons for the Foundation Series, tutored remedial reading for children, and is now teaching adults English as a second language.

*continued*



**Kathryn Aschliman** of Goshen College planned an October conference on early childhood education. **Evelyn Rouner's** keynote address was entitled "Rooted in the Family."

**Sara Shenk, Brenda Stoltzfus, Julie Froese, Joan Miller, and Ann Belser**, Goshen College students, coordinated Women's Emphasis Week which included **Anna Bowman** speaking on "Women and Depression," **Dorothy Yoder Nyce** and **Gayle Gerber Koontz** on "Sexist Language" and "Feminist Humor," **Wendy Carlton** on "The Politics of Women's Health," and **Josephine Ford** on "The Theology of Feminism."

If you have news and verbs that you would like to share with the other 1,500 readers of *Report*, send them to me at 4830 Woodland Ave., Lincoln, NE 68516.—mts

## Resources

An International Guide to Women's Periodicals and Resources is issued annually by **Resources for Feminist Research** in Toronto. It is published in their fourth issue each year, but is also available separately for \$2. Write to Jennifer L. Newton, 252 Bloor Street West, Toronto, Canada M5S 1V6.

**A Dunamis Handbook** is now available to those interested in becoming involved in the decision-making process in government, in becoming "contemplative critics" of our society. Write to Marian C. Franz, Dunamis, 2025 Massachusetts Ave. NW, Washington, DC 20036. **Dunamis** is a call to "bring the power of the Holy Spirit to bear upon political structures; members are called to be contemplative people in relationship with persons-in-power.

**Women in Development: The Neglected Key** is a color filmstrip with cassette narration and study guide which explores the problems and potential of Third World women. It is available from Mennonite Central Committee, 21 S. 12, Akron, PA 17501.

## Announcement

The Mennonite Central Committee women's task force has, in the past, responded to issues of women in church and society through scholarly research and study papers. The task force is now soliciting creative responses to the same concerns in the form of short stories, poetry, dramas, ink sketches, songs, and black/white photos. Please send contributions to Esther Wiens by 1 June 1982 for consideration in a published collection of "artists' approach to women's concerns." Esther's address is Mennonite Brethren Bible College, 77 Henderson Highway, Winnipeg, Manitoba R2L 1L1.

## Letters

Dear Friends: Thank you for the article "Reponse to the Equal Rights Amendment" by Linda Yoder in the September-October 1981 *Report*. I was one of the unfortunate Americans deceived by anti-ERA literature, but have seen "the truth" over the past year. Your publication of the article was very encouraging. I hope it does aid in the passage of this needed amendment. This amendment is another step in both sexes' search for justice and equality in our society and the coming of God's kingdom. Let me know if I can help. Shalom in Jesus, Donna Sharer, MSC Gilbert 141, Millersville, PA 17551.

## Looking Ahead

Forthcoming *Reports* will focus on:

Women and Health, January-February 1982, Rosie Epp coordinator;

Language, March-April 1982, Muriel Thiessen Stackley, coordinator;

Ordination, May-June 1982, Martha Smith Good, coordinator;

Human Sexuality, July-August 1982, Bertha Beachy, coordinator;

Peace and the Power of the Housewife, September-October 1982, Edith Krause and Muriel Thiessen Stackley, coordinators.

The *Report* is a bi-monthly publication of the MCC Peace Section Task Force on Women in Church and Society. Correspondence should be sent to Editor Muriel Thiessen Stackley, 4830 Woodland, Lincoln, NE 68516.

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